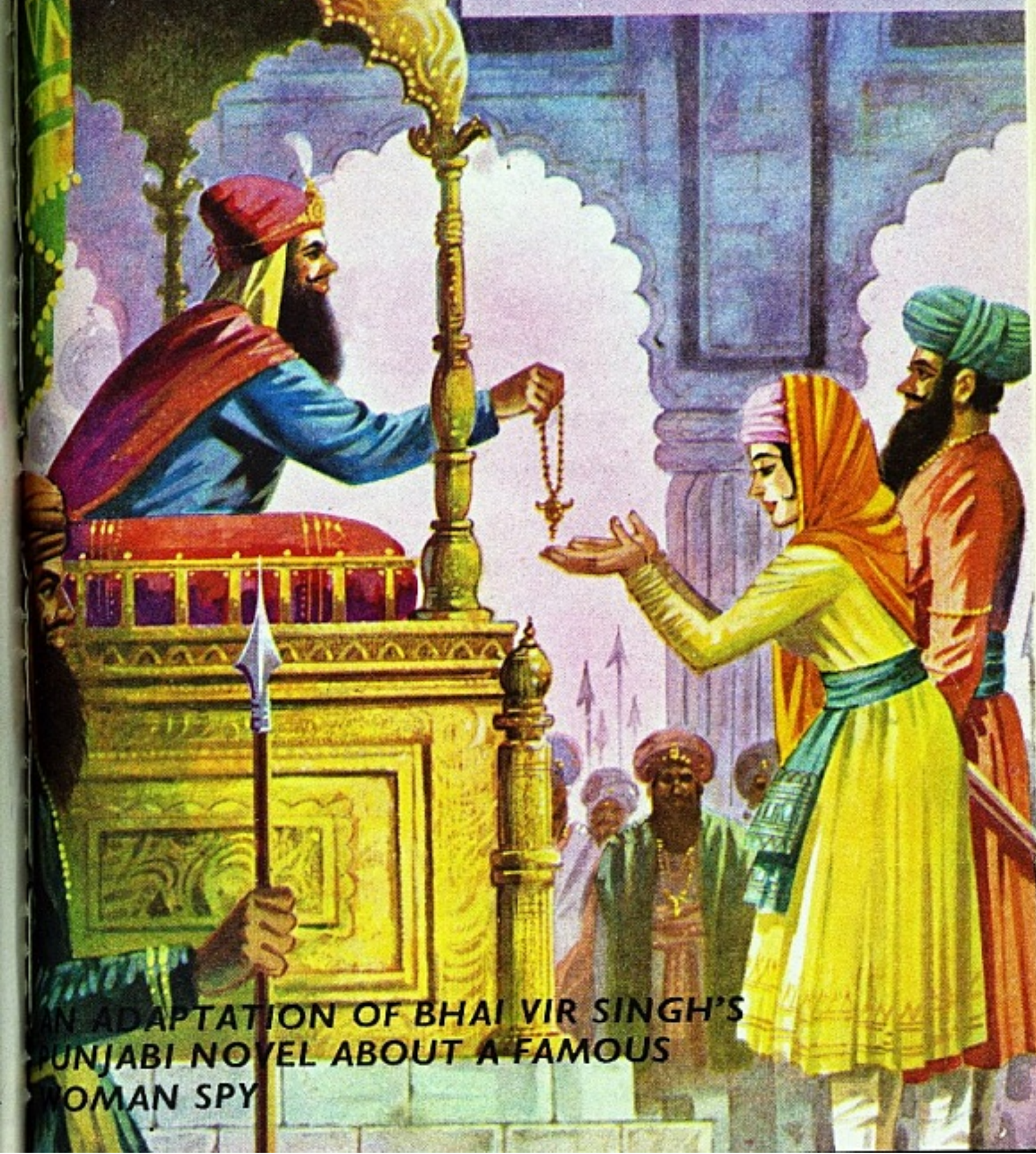


amar
chitra
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No. 96 Rs.2-50

SHARAN KAUR



AN ADAPTATION OF BHAI VIR SINGH'S
PUNJABI NOVEL ABOUT A FAMOUS
WOMAN SPY

Spying always has been a dangerous and risky occupation. Being hazardous, very few women take to this profession. There were some famous women spies like Mata Hari and White Lady in the First World War and Rhine Maiden in the Second World War. They were foreigners but if we look into our own history we come across equally courageous and intelligent women spies who served their country with the same zeal. One of them, Sharan Kaur, was a woman spy during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The story of her life tells us how, given an incentive, a positive philosophy to boost her morale and proper training, even a timid and shy woman can be transformed into a fearless and brave heroine.

There is a great deal of literature in Urdu and Punjabi on the exploits of this brave woman, the most well-known among them being the work of Bhai Vir Singh.

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SHARAN KAUR



FORT JAMROD, ON THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER OF OUR COUNTRY, WAS UNDER CONSTRUCTION. IT WAS BEING BUILT UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF SARDAR HARI SINGH NALWA, WHO HAD BEEN SENT FROM LAHORE BY MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH TO SUBDUE THE REBELS OF THAT REGION.

TWENTY-FIVE MILES NORTH OF JAMROD LIVED SHARNI, THE SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER OF A HINDU SHOPKEEPER. ONE DAY —

SHARNI, YOU WILL BE MARRIED NEXT WEEK. REMEMBER! A WOMAN'S HONOUR IS HER MOST VALUABLE POSSESSION. GUARD IT WITH YOUR LIFE.

I WILL NEVER FORGET YOUR WORDS, MOTHER.



A WEEK LATER —

I WILL SOON HAVE TO LEAVE ALL OF YOU AND GO AWAY.

HE'S COME!



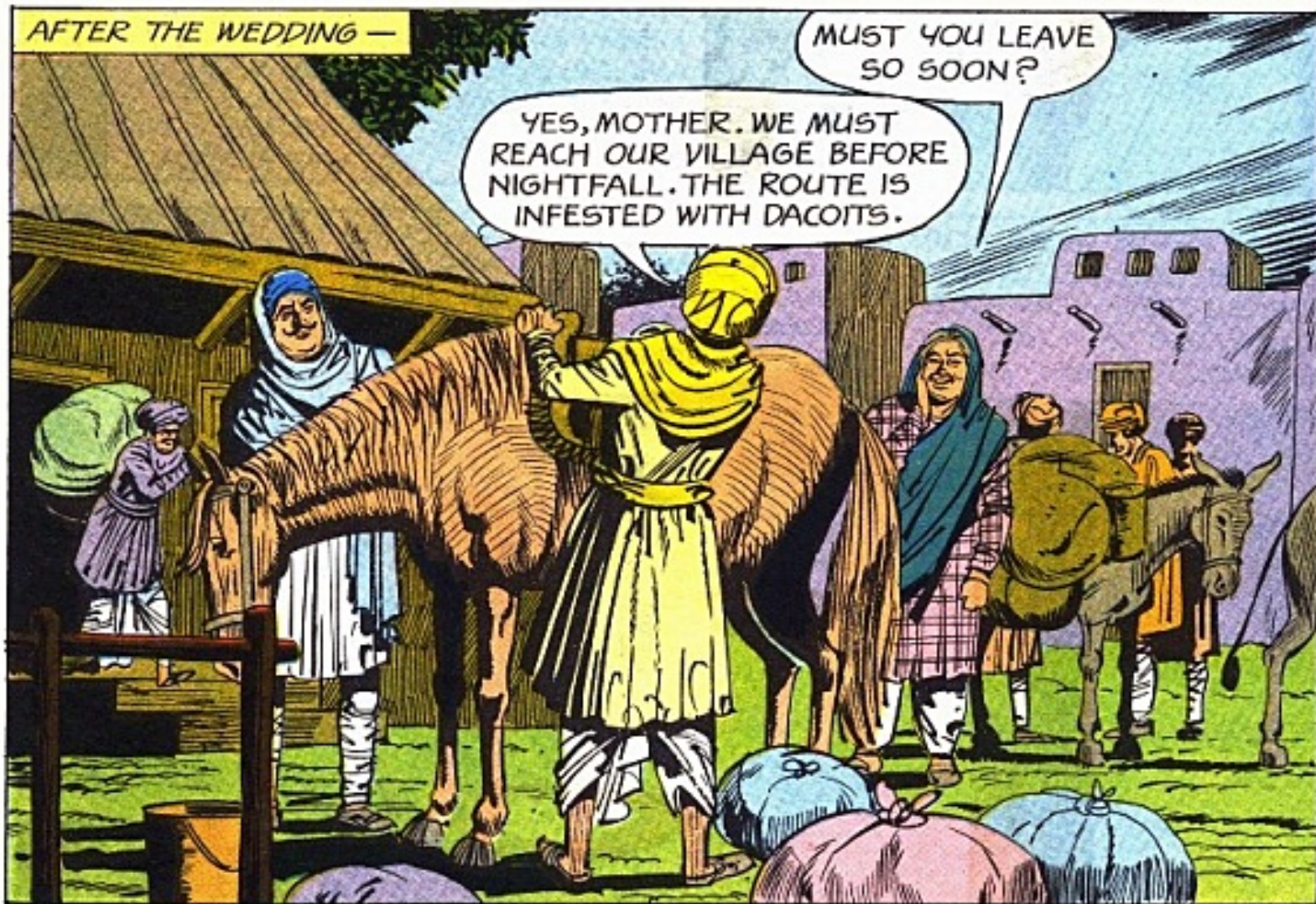
THE BRIDEGROOM, BHIMSEN, WAS THE ONLY SON OF VEERBHAN, A RICH BUSINESSMAN.



AFTER THE WEDDING —

YES, MOTHER. WE MUST REACH OUR VILLAGE BEFORE NIGHTFALL. THE ROUTE IS INFESTED WITH DACOITS.

MUST YOU LEAVE SO SOON?



A FEW HOURS LATER, AS THE BRIDAL PROCESSION WENDED ITS WAY THROUGH A NARROW JUNGLE PATH —

SURRENDER
OR DIE!

DACOITS!
RUN!

VEERBHAN,
BHIMSEN AND
THE MEN
ESCAPED.

COWARDS!
THEY'VE
RUN
AWAY.

LET THEM GO.
WE HAVE THE
BOOTY...

...AND THE
WOMAN IN
THE PALAN-
QUIN.

THEY DRAGGED SHARNI OUT OF THE PALANQUIN.

A BRIDE!
THE CHIEF WOULD
LOVE TO HAVE
HER IN HIS
HAREM.

MOTHER!
MOTHER!



MEANWHILE, AFTER
RUNNING FOR ABOUT TWO
AND A HALF MILES,
VEERBHAN AND THE
OTHERS HAD REACHED
A WATERFALL, WHERE
THEY SAT DOWN TO
REST AND TALK.

WE CANNOT RETURN TO OUR
VILLAGE WITHOUT THE BRIDE.
IT WOULD BE A DISGRACE.

NOR CAN WE
GO BACK TO HER
VILLAGE. WHAT
WOULD I SAY TO
HER PARENTS?



AN ELDERLY RELATIVE HAD AN IDEA.

WHY DON'T
WE GO TO
JAMROD AND
SEEK SARDAR
NALWA'S
HELP?

YES, UNCLE.
WHY DON'T WE?
THEY SAY HE IS
A CHAMPION OF
THE OPPRESSED.



VEERBHAN AGREED AND THE PARTY ARRIVED AT JAMROD LATE THAT NIGHT.

MAY WE SEE SARDAR NALWA?

WHY DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM AT THIS HOUR?

WE CAN'T WAIT TILL MORNING. DACOITS HAVE LOOTED ME AND ABDUCTED MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

THEN THE SARDAR WILL SEE YOU IMMEDIATELY.

THE SENTRY LED THEM TO NALWA. AFTER VEERBHAN HAD TOLD HIS TALE —

THERE WERE SO MANY OF YOU AND YOU COULD NOT PROTECT HER!

SIR, DACOITS ARE MERCILESS AND ...



THE CHIEF TURNED TO A SLAVE GIRL.



LATER, WHEN THE DACOIT CHIEF CAME TO SHARNI'S ROOM, HE WAS SO DRUNK HE COULD BARELY STAND.



THE CHIEF, AMUSED BY HER VEHEMENCE, SWAYED TOWARDS HER.



SHARNI PUSHED HIM AWAY
WITH ALL HER MIGHT.



DEAD DRUNK, THE DACOIT
CHIEF LOST HIS BALANCE
AND FELL.



AS SHARNI RAN OUT
INTO THE COURTYARD,
PAHARA SINGH AND
HIS MEN RODE IN.

YOU MUST BE SHARNI.
I HAVE COME TO RESCUE
YOU. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

BY GOD'S GRACE
NEITHER MY HONOUR
NOR I HAVE COME
TO ANY HARM, SIR.



PAHARA SINGH DISMOUNTED
AND BRANDISHED HIS SWORD.

COME OUT,
YOU
COWARDS.



WHEN THERE WAS NO RESPONSE,
HE TURNED TO HIS MEN.

ENTER THE HOUSE. ROUND
UP ALL THE MEN. BUT DON'T
TOUCH THE WOMEN.



WHEN ALL THE DACOITS WERE
CAUGHT AND HANDCUFFED —

WE WILL
TAKE THEM
TO JAMROD.

O GOD!
YOU ARE
GREAT.



AT JAMROD, IN
THE COURT OF
HARI SINGH
NALWA —

YOU ARE SEN-
TENCED TO LIFE
IMPRISONMENT.



AS NALWA WAS ABOUT TO GET UP —

SIR!

YES, MY
DAUGHTER.



I DO NOT
WANT TO RETURN
EITHER TO MY
PARENTS OR TO
MY IN-LAWS.

WHY, MY
CHILD?





NALWA OBSERVED THE COUPLE FOR A FEW DAYS. THEN ONE DAY HE SPOKE TO MAHA SINGH, THE COMMANDER OF HIS ARMY.

SHARAN KAUR IS INTELLIGENT, BRAVE AND TACITURN. I THINK SHE WOULD MAKE AN EXCELLENT SPY. WHY DON'T WE TRAIN HER TO BECOME ONE?

I TOO HAVE NOTICED HER QUALITIES. YES. I'LL TRAIN HER.

AND SO BEGAN SHARAN KAUR'S TRAINING UNDER MAHA SINGH.

A FEW MONTHS LATER, MAHA SINGH SENT FOR HER.

BIBI SHARAN KAUR, YOU ARE NOW A TRAINED SPY. I HAVE A TASK FOR YOU.

I WILL NOT FAIL YOU.

I HAVE LEARNT THAT AKBAR ALI OF UTTAMZAI IS PLANNING TO ATTACK JAMROD.

I WANT TO KNOW THE STRENGTH OF HIS ARMY. BHIMBALI SINGH WILL ACCOMPANY YOU.

THE VERY NEXT DAY SHARAN AND BHIMBALI, DISGUISED AS A PATHAN COUPLE, LEFT ON THEIR MISSION. AFTER THEY HAD COVERED SOME DISTANCE—

SHARAN,
WE ARE
BEING
FOLLOWED.

DON'T PANIC.
BE NATURAL.

WHEN THE PATHAN CAME NEARER—

YOUR PARENTS'
VILLAGE IS NOT
FAR FROM HERE.

WE SHOULD
REACH THERE
BY DUSK.



WHEN THE PATHAN OVERTOOK THEM, SHARAN KAUR SLACKENED HER PACE.

WHERE ARE
YOU GOING?

TO
UTTAMZAI.



ANY PARTICULAR
REASON?

TO VISIT MY
IN-LAWS. THEY
LIVE THERE.

THE PATHAN LOOKED BACK TO GET A GLIMPSE OF SHARAN'S FACE, THEN TURNED TO BHIMBALI.

I'M FROM UTTAMZAI,
TOO. BUT I'VE NEVER
SEEN HER BEFORE.
WHOSE DAUGHTER
IS SHE?

ALAMKHAN'S.

BEFORE THE PATHAN COULD ASK ANY MORE QUESTIONS, SHARAN STABBED HIM.

E..E..AH! YOU ARE SPIES.

BUT YOU WON'T LIVE TO TELL ON US.



BHIMBALI WAS AMAZED.

SHARNO, YOU ARE BRAVE.

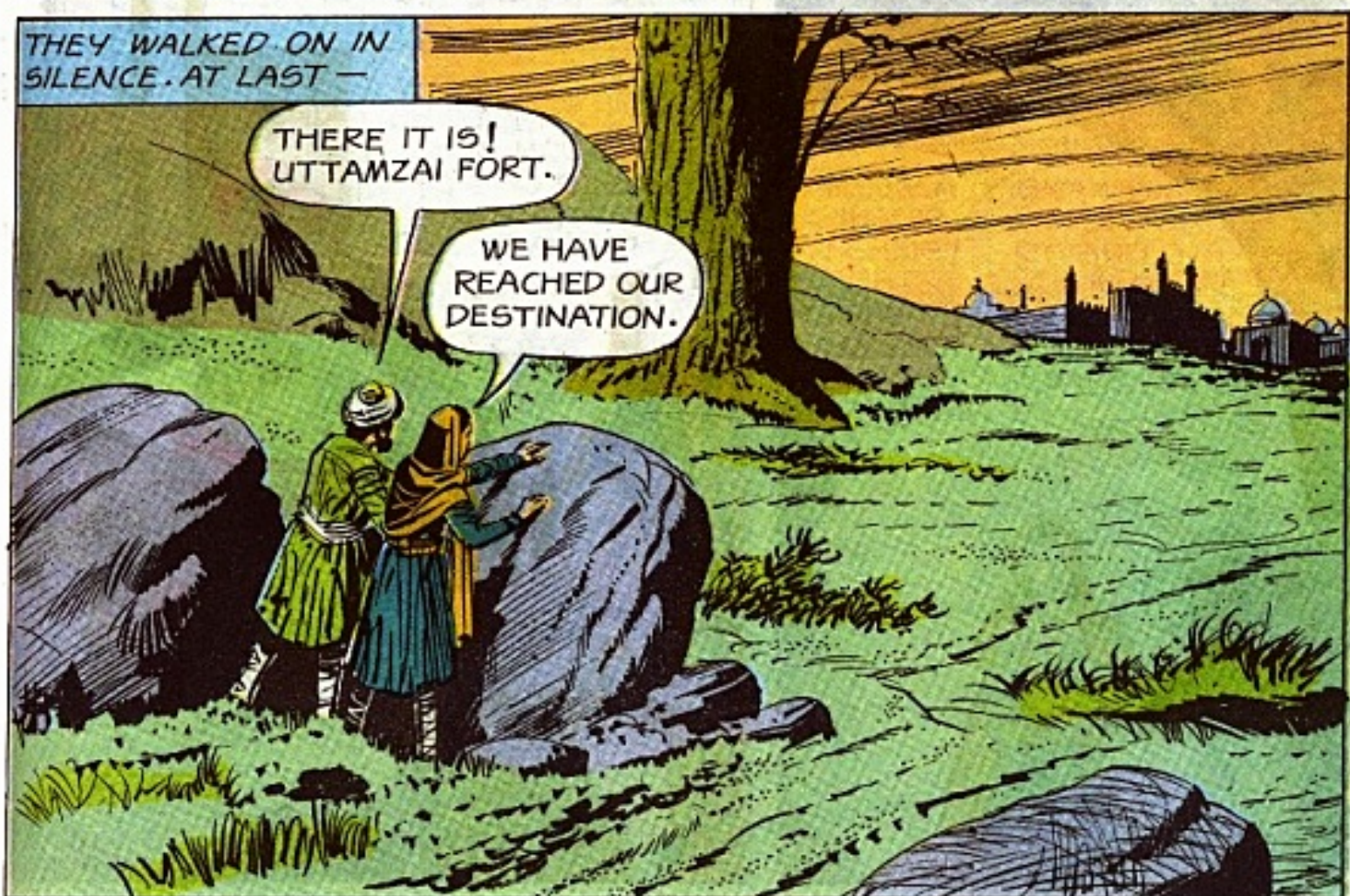
I AM A SIKH WOMAN. NOW LET'S GET AWAY BEFORE ANYONE ELSE COMES ON THE SCENE.



THEY WALKED ON IN SILENCE. AT LAST —

THERE IT IS! UTTAMZAI FORT.

WE HAVE REACHED OUR DESTINATION.





SHARAN LOOKED UP INNOCENTLY.

HOW CAN THAT HAPPEN, SARDAR? THEY HAVE A HUGE ARMY.

DON'T WORRY. OUR NUMBERS HAVE SWOLLEN. WHEN WE ATTACK, THE SIKHS AT JAMROD WILL BE CAUGHT NAPPING.

AND AKBAR WENT ON TO GIVE HER DETAILS ON THE STRENGTH OF HIS TROOPS.

SHARAN SUDDENLY LEANED FORWARD AS IF SHE WERE ABOUT TO FAINT. THE SARDAR ROSE TO SUPPORT HER.

THANK YOU FOR THE INFORMATION.

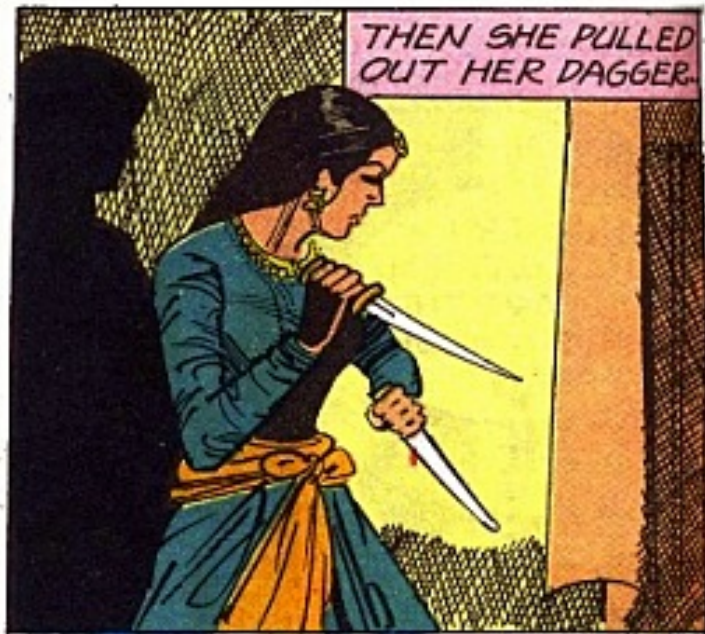
TAKE HEART, MY CHILD. STEADY YOURSELF.



AT THAT MOMENT SHARAN WHIPPED OUT A HANDKERCHIEF AND ...

...PRESSED IT TO HIS NOSE.





...TILL SHE REACHED
HER HUSBAND.

I'VE KILLED
HIM. WHERE
ARE MY
CLOTHES?

HERE.
QUICK.

A FEW MINUTES LATER,
SHARAN KAUR EMERGED
FROM BEHIND A BUSH,
NOW DISGUISED AS AN
OLD WOMAN.

BHIMBALI WAS STUNNED.

PERFECT! EVEN
I WOULDN'T HAVE
BEEN ABLE TO
RECOGNISE YOU.

GOOD. THEY
WILL SOON COME
AFTER US. LET US
MOVE ON TO THE
ROAD. WE LOOK
TOO CONSPICUOUS
HERE.

AS THEY WALKED DOWN THE
BRIDLE-PATH LEADING AWAY
FROM THE STREAM —

IT SEEMS AS
IF THE SEARCH
HAS BEGUN.

I CAN HEAR THE
TROT OF HORSES.

THEY WERE RIGHT. THE PATHANS WERE AFTER THE GIRL WHO HAD KILLED THEIR SARDAR.

THEY'VE COME. DON'T WORRY. WE'LL HANDLE THEM.



HAVE YOU SEEN A YOUNG PATHAN GIRL PASS THIS WAY? SHE HAS MURDERED OUR SARDAR.

WE DID, IN FACT, SEE A GIRL. SHE SEEMED TO BE IN A HURRY. SHE RAN DOWN THAT PATH.



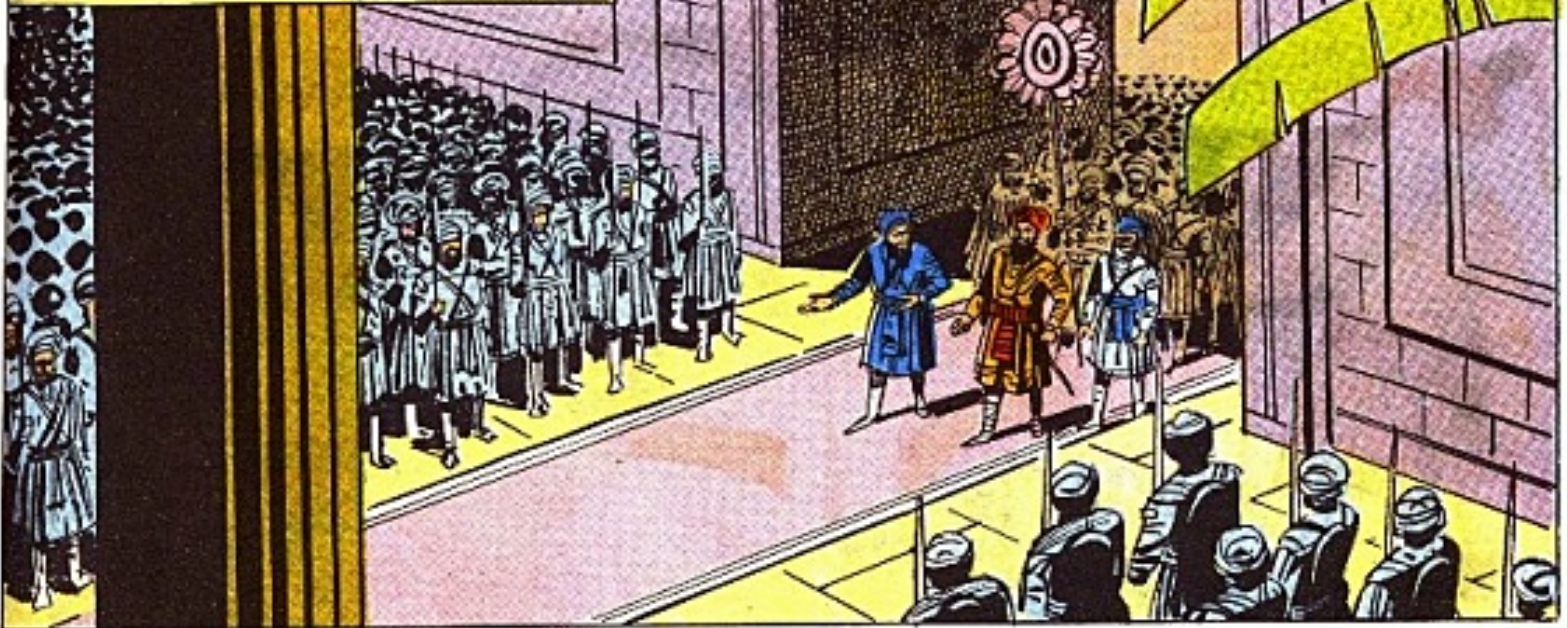
WHEN THE SOLDIERS HAD GALLOPED AWAY TOWARDS THE PATH —

WE'RE SAFE!

LET US WALK BACK TO JAMROD.



A FEW DAYS LATER, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FORT WAS COMPLETED. KUNWAR NAUNIHAL SINGH, RANJIT SINGH'S GRANDSON, CAME TO PRESIDE OVER A SPECIAL DARBAR HELD IN HONOUR OF THE OCCASION.



AT THE DARBAR, THOSE WHO HAD SERVED THE SIKH RAJ WITH DISTINCTION WERE AWARDED MEDALS. THE NAMES OF SHARAN KAUR AND BHIMBALI SINGH HEADED THE LIST.

TO BIBI SHARAN KAUR AND BHIMBALI SINGH—THE BEST SPIES OF THE RAJ—A GOLD MEDAL.



LATER -

SARDAR NALWA, YOU AND YOUR MEN HAVE DONE MUCH FOR THE RAJ. I AM PROUD OF YOU. I AM GETTING MARRIED NEXT WEEK AT LAHORE. I WANT ALL OF YOU TO COME TO THE WEDDING.

WE SHALL BE THERE, SARDAR.

AS SOON AS NAUNIHAL LEFT, HOWEVER, NALWA FELL ILL. HE SENT FOR MAHA SINGH.

I WOULD LIKE TO MOVE TO FORT BALAHISSAR FOR TREATMENT. LET THE SOLDIERS GO TO THE WEDDING. YOU STAY BACK WITH A FEW MEN AND TAKE CHARGE OF THE FORT IN MY ABSENCE.

MEANWHILE, THE BRITISH GOT WIND OF THE FACT THAT FORT JAMROD WAS NOT ADEQUATELY MANNED. THEY HELD CONSULTATIONS WITH ONE OF THEIR ALLIES, DOST MOHAMMED, THE RULER OF KABUL.

RANJIT SINGH AND HIS SIKHS HAVE BECOME VERY POWERFUL. SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO SUBDUCE THEM.

DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS?

NALWA IS ILL AND MOST OF HIS MEN ARE AWAY AT LAHORE. THIS IS THE TIME TO ATTACK FORT JAMROD.

I WILL ATTACK AS SOON AS I RALLY MY MEN.

NEWS OF DOST MOHAMMED'S INTENDED ATTACK REACHED MAHA SINGH.

SEND BIBI SHARAN KAUR TO ME.

WHEN SHARAN KAUR CAME —

I WANT YOU TO CARRY AN URGENT MESSAGE TO FORT BALAHISSAR.

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE, SARDAR?

TELL SARDAR NALWA THAT DOST MOHAMMED IS PLANNING TO ATTACK US.

IS THAT ALL, SARDAR?

THAT IS ALL. AND... YES, YOU WILL HAVE TO GO ALONE. WE NEED YOUR HUSBAND HERE.

I WILL LEAVE IMMEDIATELY, SARDAR.

SHARAN KAUR RODE TO FORT BALAHISSAR AND GAVE NALWA THE MESSAGE.

TELL MAHA SINGH THAT I'M COMING. I MUST RALLY MY MEN.



MEANWHILE, THE PATHANS HAD HEARD RUMOURS THAT AN EXPERT WOMAN SPY HAD TAKEN A MESSAGE TO NALWA FROM JAMROD.

SHE WILL HAVE TO PASS BY THIS RAVINE ON HER WAY BACK. LET US AMBUSH HER.

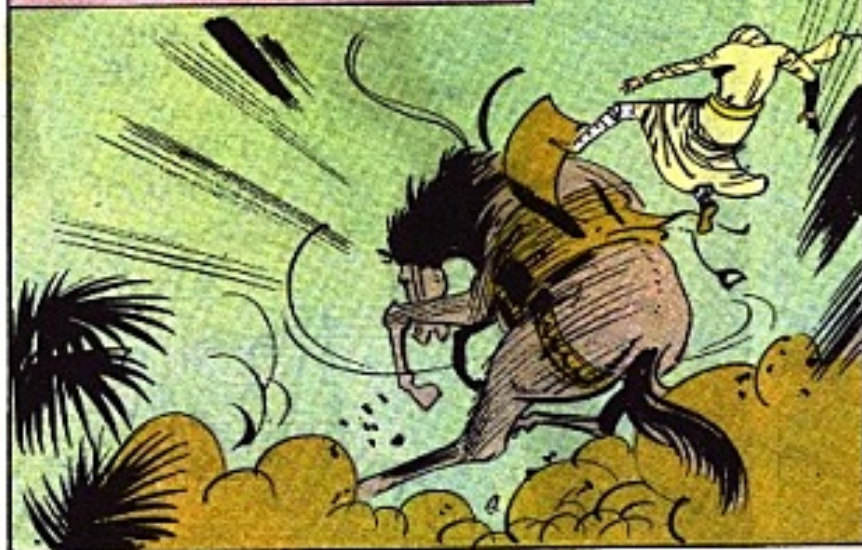


A FEW HOURS LATER —



A GUNSHOT! WHO COULD HAVE KNOWN ABOUT MY ERRAND?

SHARAN DID NOT HAVE TO WONDER FOR LONG. THE NEXT SHOT HIT HER HORSE.



IT STUMBLERD AND FELL, ROLLING HER OVER.





REALISING THAT IT WAS USELESS TO PLAY THE HELPLESS WOMAN, SHARAN TRIED ANOTHER TACTIC —

SUCH BRAVE PATHANS YOU ARE ! FOUR AGAINST ONE AND THAT TOO A WOMAN !

ARE YOU CHALLENGING US ?



YES ! IF YOU ARE MEN WHY DON'T YOU FIGHT WITH ME ?

YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST US.



GIVE ME A SWORD AND FIGHT WITH ME ONE AT A TIME.

ALL RIGHT. FREE HER ARMS AND GIVE HER A SWORD. I'LL FIGHT WITH HER.



THE TWO FENCED TILL THEY WERE EXHAUSTED.



THEN WITH A QUICK MOVE SHARAN TRIPPED HER OPPONENT ...



...AND BEHEADED HIM.

THE PATHAN NEAR HER
RAISED HIS GUN...



...BUT SHARAN
KICKED IT AWAY
AND...



...BEHEADED THE THIRD PATHAN
WHO TRIED TO ATTACK HER.



MEANWHILE, THE SECOND PATHAN WHO HAD GONE TO RETRIEVE HIS GUN, STEPPED ON A COBRA.

EE--AH--!
I'VE BEEN
BITTEN BY
A SNAKE.

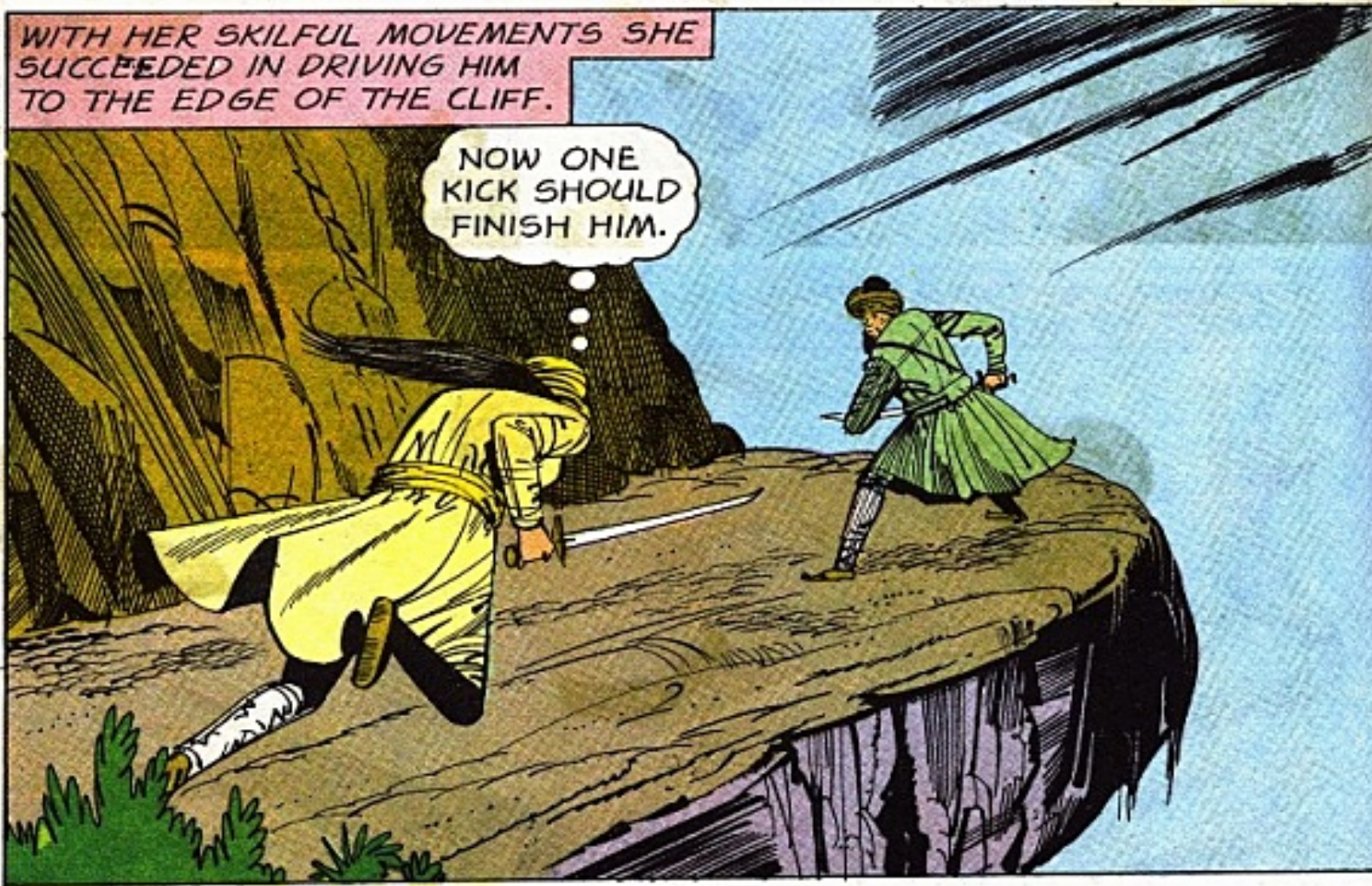


SHARAN NOW FACED THE SURVIVING PATHAN.



WITH HER SKILFUL MOVEMENTS SHE SUCCEEDED IN DRIVING HIM TO THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF.

NOW ONE
KICK SHOULD
FINISH HIM.



WITH THE IMPACT OF SHARAN'S KICK, THE PATHAN LOST HIS BALANCE.



SHARAN RAN FOR ABOUT HALF A MILE AND THEN SAT DOWN TO REST.



O GOD! YOU ARE MERCIFUL. YOU SAVED ME AGAIN.

IT WAS MORNING WHEN SHARAN TRUDGED WEARILY INTO FORT JAMROD.

SARDAR NALWA WILL BE HERE ANY MOMENT.



THANK GOD! I'VE JUST RECEIVED THE NEWS THAT DOST MOHAMMED IS ON HIS WAY.

THE ARMIES OF NALWA AND DOST MOHAMMED MET OUTSIDE FORT JAMROD.



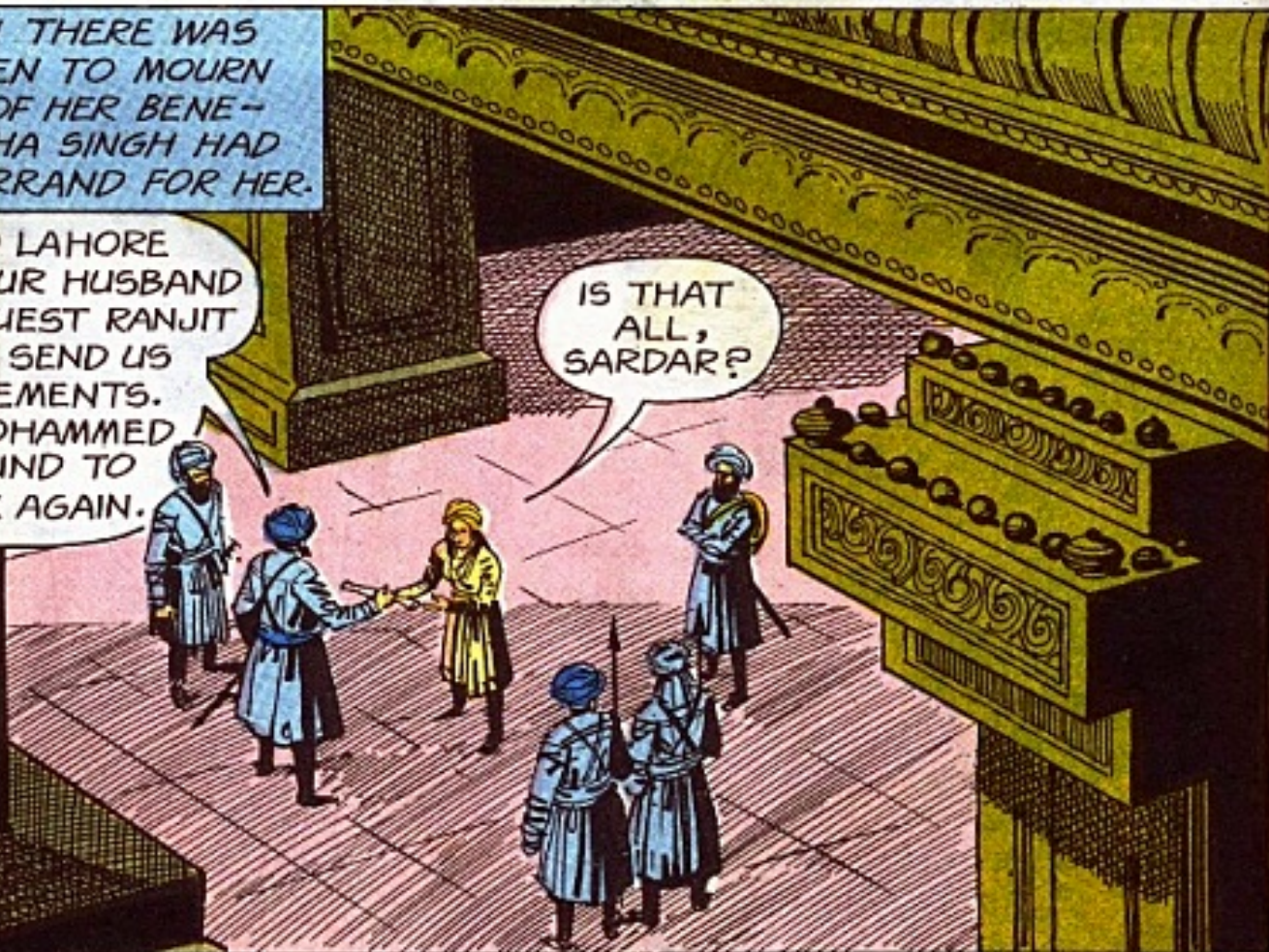
DOST MOHAMMED WAS DEFEATED BUT AT THE COST OF NALWA'S LIFE.



FOR SHARAN THERE WAS NO TIME EVEN TO MOURN THE DEATH OF HER BENEFACTOR. MAHA SINGH HAD ANOTHER ERRAND FOR HER.

GO TO LAHORE WITH YOUR HUSBAND AND REQUEST RANJIT SINGH TO SEND US REINFORCEMENTS. DOST MOHAMMED IS BOUND TO ATTACK AGAIN.

IS THAT ALL, SARDAR?



SEE THAT YOU GIVE THE MESSAGE TO HIM PERSONALLY. I DO NOT TRUST VAZIR DHIAN SINGH.

I WILL, SARDAR.

AT LAHORE WHEN SHARAN AND BHIMBALI GAVE RANJIT SINGH THE MESSAGE AND THE NEWS OF NALWA'S DEATH—

I HAVE LOST MY BEST GENERAL.

SIR, THIS IS THE THIRD APPEAL FOR REINFORCEMENTS. THE OTHER TWO WERE SENT BY SARDAR NALWA.

STRANGE. THE OTHER TWO MESSAGES NEVER REACHED ME. DHIAN SINGH, I SHALL GO PERSONALLY TO JAMROD AND MEET DOST MOHAMMED. GIVE ME THE BEST MEN WE HAVE.

I WILL, SIR.

MAHA SINGH WAS RIGHT. JEALOUSY, DHIAN SINGH HAD INTERCEPTED THE MESSAGES FROM HIS RIVAL, NALWA. HE TURNED TO THE COUPLE.

BHIMBALI, YOU MAY STAY WITH THE OTHER OFFICERS. BIBI SHARAN KAUR WILL STAY WITH MY FAMILY.

LATER, AS SHARAN KAUR RESTED IN HER ROOM, DHIAN SINGH ENTERED WITHOUT EVEN KNOCKING.

YOU TRIED TO TELL ON ME, DIDN'T YOU?

I ONLY DID MY DUTY.

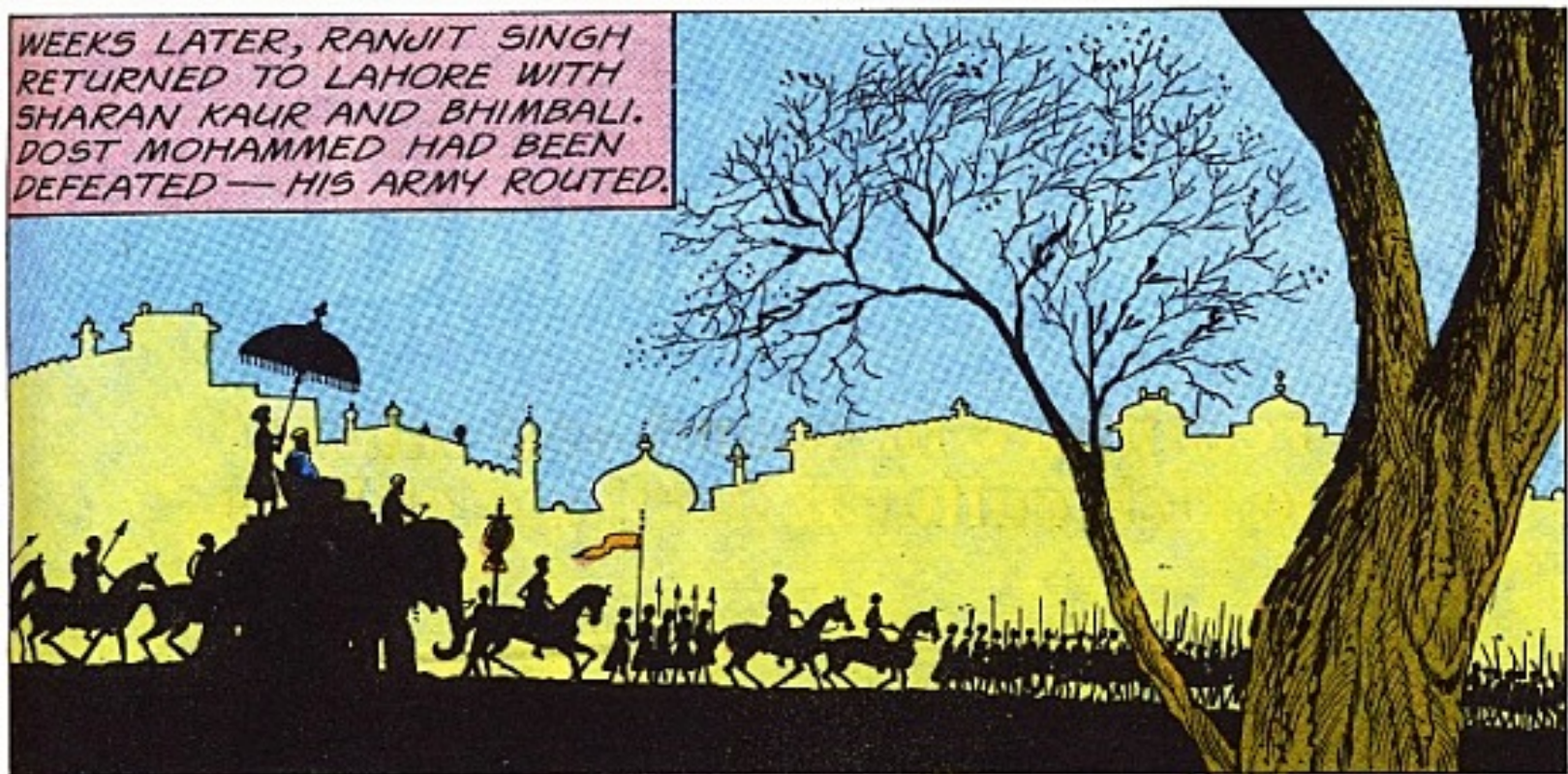
HE ADVANCED MENACINGLY TOWARDS SHARAN.

FOR THAT YOU WILL NOT GO BACK ALIVE.

BEFORE HE COULD SAY ANOTHER WORD, SHARAN LEAPT FORWARD AND PRESSED HER KERCHIEF TO HIS NOSE.

THEN, LEAVING THE UNCONSCIOUS DHIAN SINGH ON THE FLOOR, SHARAN RAN OUT TO RANJIT SINGH'S PALACE.

WEEKS LATER, RANJIT SINGH RETURNED TO LAHORE WITH SHARAN KAUR AND BHIMBALI. DOST MOHAMMED HAD BEEN DEFEATED — HIS ARMY ROUTED.



AT A SPECIAL DURBAR THE GREAT RANJIT SINGH HIMSELF BESTOWED HONOURS ON SHARAN KAUR AND BHIMBALI.

THESE MEDALS ARE FOR YOUR SELFLESS SERVICES AND EXCELLENT ESPIONAGE.



THAT WAS THE MOST GLORIOUS MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF SHARAN KAUR, THE SHY HELPLESS BRIDE WHO HAD BECOME THE BRAVEST WOMAN IN SIKHDOM.



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